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AUTHOR Clyde, Margaret
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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to discover the ethical and professional concerns of people working as early childhood professionals in kindergartens and day care centers in Victoria, Australia. A survey was sent to over 50 kindergartens and 50 government-subsidized child care centers within a 100-kilometer radius of central Melbourne. The survey consisted of open-ended and multiple-choice questions relating to critical issues and dilemmas relevant to the early childhood workers' experiences in face-to-face, administrative, and organizational roles. All members of staff in each center were surveyed. Findings, which were remarkably consistent with American data, indicated that there were many concerns which were common throughout the centers. Conflicts with parents emerged as the greatest concern. Preliminary appraisal of the results suggests that many of the dilemmas could be prevented by adequate preparation during pre-service or in-service training of early childhood workers. A small section of the survey is concerned with early childhood workers' attitudes towards working with male early childhood workers. (RH)

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CONCERNS OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL: AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Margaret Clyde
Principal Lecturer in
Early Childhood Studies
School of Early Childhood Studies
University of Melbourne
Kew, Victoria. 3101

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CONCERNS OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL : AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

Margaret Clyde
School of Early Childhood Studies
University of Melbourne
Melbourne
Victoria, Australia

- 3.1 The purpose of the study is to discover some of the ethical issues and general professional concerns of people working as early childhood professionals in kindergartens and child care centres in Victoria, Australia. A small section is concerned with early childhood workers' attitudes towards working with male early childhood workers.
- 3.2 A survey was sent to over fifty kindergartens and fifty government-subsidised child care centres within a one hundred kilometer radius of central Melbourne. The survey consisted of open-ended and multiple choice questions relating to critical issues and dilemmas relevant to the early childhood workers' experiences in both face to face and administrative and organisational roles. All members of staff in each targeted centre were surveyed.
- 3.3 Results indicate that there are many concerns which are common throughout all the surveyed centres. The actual details will be presented for discussion at the Conference.
- 3.4 It would appear from a preliminary appraisal of the results that many of the dilemmas may be "preventible" by more adequate preparation during the pre-service and/or by in-service training components of early childhood workers' professional education. This component will form the major part of the Conference presentation.

'Being a competent professional' is a phrase which is certain to grab the attention of everyone within the early childhood field with any sense of work ethic; we all want to be perceived as 'professional' in terms of the work we do and we all need to be recognised as 'competent' in terms of our approach to that work. The notion of being a professional is fairly new to the early childhood field; the literature is confined mainly to the last two decades and has increased in volume and intensity over the past five years or so. Prior to the 1970's we were perceived as female 'do gooders' who cheerfully and enthusiastically 'saved' the nation's poor young children from an uncertain fate for very little remuneration. However the spread of early childhood programs across the total population, together with the development of a range of services for young children and their parents, and finally the acknowledged financial commitment of government at all levels to these services has meant that the early childhood field has assumed a very different complexion in terms of the personnel operating in the field, the training provided for these people, the services offered and the attitude of the community to this group of unique workers within the last two decades. It is pleasing to note that this raising of consciousness has been aided and abetted by an increasing amount of serious literature and conferences, such as this one, which devote time and thought to this very important topic.

My own interest in the concept of professionalism in relation to my chosen field of work has been a long and, at times, conflicting one; as someone who has worked in the field for over thirty years in various capacities and mixed both formally and informally with students, teachers, caregivers, administrators, bureaucrats and academics, I have witnessed a change in professional attitude of some of this group as they moved from beginners to mature, sophisticated purveyors of their early childhood roles. I had the opportunity in 1987, as the de Lissa Fellow at the de Lissa Institute of Early Childhood and Family Studies at SACAE, to spend most of my time pondering, reading and discussing with colleagues the whole notion of early childhood professionalism. It seems to me that of the various characteristics of professionalism per se which are used by sociologists and others to describe professionals, four are very relevant to our chosen field.

Firstly, professionals are altruistic; they have a commitment to something beyond their own status and their own self-esteem; a true professional, we are informed by Lindsay and Lindsay (1987), does not keep office hours when there is a need for their services outside those hours.

Secondly, professionals are knowledgeable and skilful; as a result of prolonged training they possess certain demonstrable theoretical knowledge, as well as skills and attitudes which can be readily translated into practical skills which no one else can demonstrate. For us this would imply nurturing, instructional and facilitating skills which are used when working with young children and their families. In addition professional people are recognised as possessing a desire for self enhancement, thus ensuring that these knowledge, attitudes and skills acquired at the preservice level are maintained and continually augmented during the

person's period within the profession. This quality has been labelled by Almy (1975) as 'self enhancement'.

Thirdly, professionals belong to a national body which endeavours to enhance the objectives of the profession. It is interesting to note however that Spodek (1987) has suggested that in order to become part of a profession it is necessary to know its history and traditions. Perhaps this is an area which has almost been forgotten in preservice programs but which perhaps should be rejuvenated? It is disturbing to note that there may be some younger members here today who regard their older colleagues - those of us on the wrong side of fifty - as part of that history of early childhood!

Finally, but most interestingly for me, professionals adhere to a workable code of ethics, either created previously by their colleagues such as the medical practitioner's Hippocratic Oath, or a code developed by the person themselves. Feeney and Sysko (1986:15) have suggested that through

... a code of ethics, a profession acknowledges its distinctive responsibility towards society.'

The important thing about this code of ethics is that it has to be workable, rather than a 'pious, unenforceable code which is a publicity stunt' (Spodek, 1987) and it has to cater for the profession's clients. Presumably the early childhood worker's clients are primarily young children and their families so our code will firstly cover areas such as equity for young children in terms of sex, age, race and ethnic background; a determination to ensure the child is not open to abuse of any kind; secondly a commitment to operate a policy of social justice by offering relevant services to as many families as possible; and thirdly, a desire to work with parents and colleagues in a way that will respect their strengths but at the same time assist the young child's development towards independence.

But just what is this nebulous 'code of ethics' which appear to be all things to all people? A code of ethics, whether it applies to a netball team, a management team at BHP or a group of early childhood workers is a set of value judgements relating to the way in which the person or group should behave in order to uphold or abide by the professional values of that group. As such, it provides a basis for critical reflection upon our role as professionals, for argument or action in our professional lives, (Feeney and Sysko: 1986), and as a basis for principles related to our professional role. While many people confuse 'goals' and 'ethics', ethics are, according to Katz, 'statements about how to conduct oneself in the course of implementing goals.' (Katz, 1980:139)

Katz (1980) has expressed the baseline of an ethical code succinctly: a code of ethics would include the beliefs of the particular group about what is right rather than expedient, what is good rather than simply practical, a description of acts which members of the group must never engage in or condone, even if those acts would work or if members could 'get away with them', or acts to which members must never be 'accomplices, bystanders, or contributors'. (Katz, 1980: 139)

A decision based on a professional code of ethics is less likely to be challenged by members of the profession and hopefully by non-members who interact with us in the course of our professional activities. A code of ethics should, therefore, expedite both day to day and long term decisions

making in that it will help us determine what it is that responsible early childhood educators should - and should not - do.

Katz has described the moral task most succinctly:

The development of a code of ethics for early childhood educators is not an easy task. The process involves identifying the major temptations confronted in the course of practice. The code should address ethical dilemmas inherent in relations with children, parents, colleagues, employers, and the general lay public. Ethical norms of a group of colleagues, articulated in a code of ethics, can help to give individuals the feeling that colleagues will back them up when they take a risky but courageous stand in the face of an ethical dilemma.'

(Katz, 1988:77)

The implications of this statement becomes more clear when you realise that the NAEYC, having worked on this task for over sixty years, produced a code of ethics recently. It is couched in very negative terms and is a severe disappointment to many of us in the early childhood field.

In the light of this statement it would appear that two steps need to be carried out by any professional group in order to develop a relevant code of ethics; firstly to 'ascertain the most frequent and most severe ethical conflicts confronted by practitioners' (Katz,1980:150), and secondly to 'collaborate with philosophers to combine expertise' (Feeney and Kipnis,1985:56) in order to develop moral standards for our profession. It appeared necessary, therefore, to identify ethical dilemmas relevant to the early childhood field in Australia in order to begin the process of developing a code of ethics for the Australian early childhood field.

Feeney and Sysko (1986) published the results of a survey of ethical concerns of NAEYC members they had undertaken in 1985 so that appeared to me to be the best place to start; I contacted Professor Feeney in February, 1988 and obtained permission to replicate her USA study with minor amendments, on a selected Australian early childhood population. Professor Feeney was generous enough to supply all her original data and my colleague, Dr. Jill Rodd, and I have spent a great deal of time running print outs of data for cross referencing. In terms of the 'minor' amendments, we rewrote some examples so that they had a greater applicability to the Australian scene, e.g. 'Knowing that the program is in violation of state regulations' was amended to read, 'knowing that the centre/program is in violation of government regulations'; 'staff-agency interaction' was changed to read 'staff-employing body interaction' and phrases such as 'conflicting obligations' and 'curriculum program practice' were expanded to provide more examples while the one word statement on 'whistleblowing' was changed to read 'violation of governmental/legal regulations or standards that warranted reporting'.

Basically however, the intention was the same; namely to identify the kinds of ethical dilemmas which early childhood workers face and the source of those dilemmas and then to determine whether these dilemmas were 'situation-specific' i.e., whether conflicts reported by centre based child care workers were similar to or different from those of people working in kindergartens or other areas of children's services; whether there were more ethical dilemmas present in some relationship dimensions than others, e.g. do parents/staff interactions generate more dilemmas than

staff/staff interactions, and finally to determine the ways in which early childhood workers typically resolve their ethical dilemmas and what is the basis for that solution?

The other questions contained in the Australian survey which did not appear on the original Feeney and Sysko survey were concerned with the attitude of the early childhood field to working with males. This was information which I required for my Ph.D. work. The survey was trialled and then sent to 85 child care centres and 85 kindergartens throughout Victoria. The centres were randomly sampled from a list of centres used for practicum placement for students enrolled in the undergraduate course offered by the School of Early Childhood studies, University of Melbourne. The accompanying letter requested that all staff in paid employment at the centre be provided with the opportunity to complete the questionnaire individually and return it anonymously by mail. It pointed out that participation in the survey was voluntary and that staff could choose not to participate by simply not returning a completed questionnaire. Of the 170 centres surveyed, valid questionnaires were returned by 119 respondents from 92 centres indicating a general concern with ethical issues by the early childhood field. Feeney and Sysko's response from NAEYC membership had been much smaller; they received a 'little' less than 600 responses from the 56,000 membership (about 12%, but they claimed this indicated an interest by the NAEYC membership in a code of ethics.)

Insert Table 1 about here.

The background of the respondents in the Australian sample (summarised in Table 1) provides information about the kind of early childhood worker who is interested in and concerned about professional issues. The great majority of respondents were female, and with responses from only 4 male early childhood workers, and examination of concerns specific to male workers in early childhood proved to be unwarranted. The age of the respondents was representative of the general age of early childhood workers with the majority of responses (62.2%) coming from workers aged under 30 years. The majority of respondents were qualified (84.9%) with the highest frequency of responses (57.8%) from those respondents who hold child care qualifications. Approximately one quarter of the respondents were enrolled in further study possibly reflecting a lack of concern with upgrading professional training from lower-level certificate and diploma qualifications to degree qualifications. This characteristic is in marked contrast to Feeney and Sysko's sample where 82.0% had at least a bachelor's degree, and which reinforces for me the commitment of North Americans' to continued professional development. It does not auger well for the Australian early childhood field's commitment to that professional characteristic of a commitment to life long professional development.

The Australian respondents were employed mainly in centre-based child care (70.4%), as opposed to kindergarten workers (18.5%). About 10% of respondents did not respond to this question.

The respondents indicated that they had significant work experience which is consistent with the American data. The majority of the respondents (45.4%) reported that they had eleven or more years of practical experience in the early childhood field. However, it is interesting to note that the next largest group of respondents had between 1-5 years of experience (35.3%) which is not consistent with Katz's (1977) suggestion that it is the more experienced staff who extend their interest to professional values, issues and concerns compared with less experienced

staff. However, Feeney and Sysko reported that the less experienced respondents and less well-educated respondents tended not to answer the open-ended questions, possibly due to their lack of experience.

A majority of the female workers (57.1%), indicated that they were presently, or had, in the past, worked with a male early childhood worker. While only four males responded to the survey, it appears that a greater number of males may be working in the early childhood field, particularly in child care, where 54.0% of the staff indicated they had worked with a male compared to 27.4% of kindergarten/pre-school teachers.

In terms of work experience, nearly half the respondents (48.7%) reported that their present position was their first job. This is in keeping with the data relating to length of work experience and age of the respondents; 33.0% had worked for less than six years and 36.1% of respondents were under 25 years of age. Those who did report a previous employment history indicated backgrounds as teachers' aides, integration aides, clerks and nursing or community workers.

The respondents were asked to comment generally on professional concerns and ethical issues as they arose in their work. No significant differences in the responses to the survey were found between kindergarten/pre-school teachers and child care staff, with over half (55.5%) of the respondents reporting that the issue of ethical dilemmas was very important in the early childhood profession and 37.8% rating ethical dilemmas as important. This finding is consistent with the American data which also found overwhelming agreement (93.0%) about the importance of ethical dilemmas as a professional concern.

When asked to estimate the frequency with which ethical dilemmas arose in their work, 76.4% of the respondents reported that they regularly encountered ethical dilemmas. Consequently, it is not surprising to find that 92.4% of the respondents indicated that the establishment of a code of ethics was a priority for the profession, as did the American sample. Interestingly, child care workers were the greatest supporters of the establishment of a code of ethics, followed by kindergarten/pre-school teachers and lastly, child care co-ordinators. Perhaps this is because child care workers reported facing the highest incidence of ethical dilemmas in their work compared to pre-school/kindergarten teachers and child care co-ordinators. These data are not consistent with the American findings where specialists (training staff, co-ordinators, advisors) reported the highest rates of encounters with ethical dilemmas but this finding may be due to a multitude of reasons, including the differences in samples in the two studies, the training of early childhood workers in the two samples or the roles of the personnel included in the two samples. In terms of length of work in the early childhood workplace, those respondents with more than ten years of experience (40.8%) were most supportive of the establishment of a code of ethics, followed by those with 5-10 years experience (32.0%). This is consistent with both the findings of Feeney and Sysko (1985) and Katz's (1977) observations about the relationship between the length of experience in the field and an interest in professional concerns.

Insert Table 2 about here.

Table 2 identifies and ranks, in terms of frequency, the ethical issues which the respondents independently identified as having faced in their work with children and families. As Feeney and Sysko reported, the data

indicated that ethical problems most often arose when adults found themselves in conflict about acceptable treatment of children. Conflicts with parents over issues such as discipline, centre policy regarding the admission of sick children and access matters with separated and divorced parents were the most frequently nominated (28.8%) followed by concern over professional issues (10.4%) such as conduct, confidentiality and the provision of an appropriate environment for children.

When asked to rank the ethical issues found to be of greatest concern in Feeney and Sysko's data, the Australia respondents identified the issue of *'dealing with requests to treat children in ways believed to be harmful or inappropriate'* as of greatest concern (53.8%) followed by *'discussing a child in a non-professional setting'* (46.5%) and *'knowing that the centre is in violation of government regulations'* (37.8%). These data are summarised in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here.

Although Feeney and Sysko's findings did not include the issue of *'sharing the nurturing role with the male early childhood workers'*, this issue was included in the present research because no Australian data are available. The Australian respondents ranked this issue as the last among the other issues with only 6.7% reporting that it was of some concern, compared to 70.6% of respondents who indicated that it was of little or no concern as an ethical issue. In fact, 90.8% of the respondents indicated that males should be encouraged to work in the early childhood field. Males were seen as making a special contribution to the field because males provided a role model for children of female sole parents (21.6%) have a different outlook on life compared with females (14.4%), while male strength, character and personality act as a balance and challenge to the female stereotyping of the nurturing and caregiving role in early childhood services. The respondents presented the following explanations for the limited numbers of male workers in the early childhood years: lack of public acceptance (15.2%), lack of pay and promotional opportunities (8.8%), the stigma of male involvement in child abuse (7.2%) and conflict over the 'naturalness' of males performing basic care tasks (7.2%). These concerns were raised by a limited number of respondents when compared to the overwhelmingly positive attitude (90.8%) towards male involvement in the field.

In order to find the relationship of people involved in these dilemmas, the respondents were asked to rate how often ethical problems would be likely to occur in interaction between themselves and other staff, parents, administrators, employing bodies and with individual or agencies outside the centre or program (e.g. college staff, specialists, consultants). The data presented in Table 4 confirm the Feeney and Sysko data with problems between staff and parents reported as the most commonly encountered interactional difficulty.

Insert Table 4 about here.

In terms of staff/parent interaction, ethical dilemmas for staff occurred over confidentiality and gossip, difference in values and ideas about child management and training, centre policies, fees and a lack of communication with parents. Staff were particularly concerned about parents' apparent lack of trust in and recognition of professional training and credibility of advice given by trained early childhood professionals. With staff/staff interactions, staff reported ethical conflict over issues such as confidentiality, incompetence and lack of confidentiality, lack of

professionalism, judgemental attitudes, lack of communication, consensus and team work. Staff were concerned about the poor definition of roles within centres especially in terms of who is in charge and who makes the decisions. Poor management by administrators was reported as the major difficulty in staff/administration interaction with lack of policy, poor communication and decision-making skills and conflict resolution skills cited as significant problems. In terms of staff-employing body interactions, concern was expressed over working conditions, lack of planning and consultation, interference in day to day running of the centre/program, lack of communication and biased treatment of staff. Finally, with agencies outside the centre, especially training organisations, difference in expectations, unprofessional behaviour of other staff, lack of feedback, misperceptions by other staff and lack of conflict resolution skills were nominated as areas of concern.

The other dimension of Feeney and Sysko's study involved identifying the problems under categories. In terms of particular problem areas which appear to be of concern to early childhood professionals, Feeney and Sysko's classification of problem content areas was modified for Australian conditions. Respondents were asked to rate the problems from 'of greatest concern' on to 'of least concern'. Table 5 summarises the most frequently reported type of professional concern by early childhood professionals.

Insert Table 5 about here.

Again, concerns over relationships with parents emerged as of greatest professional and ethical concern in the early childhood field with the issue of *'identifying and handling suspected child abuse and neglect'* ranked as of greatest concern (54.7%) followed by *'unprofessional behaviour on the part of staff'* (31.9%) and *'confidentiality of information in and out of the centre'* (28.6%). These three concerns were rated as the top three concerns by the American sample. When asked to indicate what type of assistance early childhood professionals needed in order to feel more comfortable in handling professional concerns and ethical dilemmas, 36.0% of the respondents identified the need for the development and extensions of early childhood professionals associations which could provide literature, in-service training, back-up and counselling for staff. Only 11.2% suggested that assistance could be provided by the establishment of a set of guidelines concerning standards of practice and a code of ethics, which is surprising, given the earlier enthusiastic response to the establishment of a code of ethics. Networking and improving information exchange and communication between members of the field was suggested as a means of assistance by 9.6% of respondents.

This preliminary study of the concerns of a sample of Australian early childhood professionals has provided some insights into, and clarification of the early childhood field's beliefs regarding professional concerns and ethical dilemmas. The data have proven to be remarkably consistent with Feeney and Sysko's findings, suggesting that Australian and American early childhood professionals, while differing in levels of training, share similar concerns at this stage of the professionalisation process.

One of the more interesting findings is the similarity of professional concerns for child care and kindergarten/pre-school teaching staff. No significant differences were found in the concerns and ethical dilemmas which were rated of greatest concern for these two groups despite, until recently, quite different training programs. Rodd (1988:48) argued that the early childhood professional who survived into the twenty-first century

would be '.....an androgynous early childhood professional' who had integrated the best and most appropriate characteristics, knowledge and skills from the care and education areas. Perhaps this trend towards integration has begun in the area of professional concerns and ethical dilemmas.

The finding that the issue of greatest concern to the early childhood field in Australia is over 'conflicts with parents' over specific policies, parental requests to treat children in ways considered harmful and inappropriate and handling suspected cases of child abuse and negligence indicates the responsibility staff feel as advocates for children's rights and as parent educators. Staff/parent interaction was rated as the most conflict-ridden relationship in the early childhood field. Ebbeck and Clyde (1988) have suggested that one of the reasons for this staff/parent conflict could be the result of the confusion within the early childhood field relating to their primary commitment; is it to children, or to parents? This confusion has been exacerbated by the changing needs and demands of the community and the ongoing debate about whether children's services are primarily for parents or children. They added:

"In addition, other issues such as inadequate funding from government sources, peripheral as they might be, to the day to day teaching of the professional, infringe in a very real way on that person's total work. At times these other issues overshadow the main task, that of providing quality services"

(Ebbeck and Clyde, 1985:280)

This points to the necessity of further training in the area of communication and interpersonal skills. The changing nature of families, society and the early childhood worker's role suggests that staff will be required to develop a diverse range of skills, among them a sophisticated competence in interpersonal skills (Rodd, 1987). Skills such as listening, feedback, assertion, conflict resolution and negotiation skills are essential for dealing with parents and will be valuable in handling other professional concerns.

In terms of the professionalisation of the field, Vander Ven (1986) argued that it was a code of ethics which set a professional apart from a mere occupation. In this study, while 92.4% of respondents believe that the establishment of a code of ethics is a priority for the early childhood field, only 11.2% of the Australian sample suggested that a code of ethics could be of assistance in dealing with professional concerns and ethical issues. These data suggest that, in Australia, the early childhood field has a way to go before it can be regarded as a profession. A large minority of respondents (36.0%) were more interested in greater access to individual assistance provided by a professional association rather than having access to general guidelines for standards of practice which are derived from a code of ethics.

This kind of response has been partially explained by Katz (1977), in her work on teacher's developmental stages. Her argument is that there are at least four developmental stages exhibited by early childhood teachers, each of which has discernible characteristics. The initial stage, characterised by a preoccupation with survival in the field necessitates that the early childhood worker receive 'support, understanding, encouragement, comfort and guidance' (Katz, 1977:8) and a great deal of onsite 'hands on training'. The second of Katz's stages, that of consolidation involves just

that; the early childhood worker spends more time concentrating on helping individual children and implementing theoretical knowledge and skills. During these two stages it would not be anticipated that the worker would be concerned with esoteric notions of ethics, values or professional morality. As 35.3% of the Australian sample had been working for less than six years it is possible to argue that these caregivers and teachers are still passing through the basic survival and consolidation stages. However as 45.4% of the total sample had been working for eleven or more years and therefore should have been demonstrating more of the characteristics of Katz's later stages of teacher development, such as being more perceptive to professional roles on a national and regional basis, becoming readers of professional journals and modellers of their programs in addition to demonstrating increasing perceptions about the role of the early childhood worker, the place of early childhood services in the community as well as an interest in the way decisions are made. These kinds of activities, demonstrated by professionals at the final stage of Katz's model, would be conducive to thinking about a code of ethics, and may be reached by some people within three to five years of entering the profession, according to Katz.

Finally a high degree of consistency was noted between the Australian and American data, suggesting that the adoption of the code of ethics being developed by the NAEYC in America would be a possibility for the Australian early childhood field. However, some concern has been expressed in Australia about the negative and prescriptive tone of that document. Australian early childhood workers would be likely to feel more comfortable with a code of ethics which was written in a more positive and encouraging style. But in any case, Australian practitioners need to view the adoption of a more assertive position in the area of professional concerns as part of their roles for and responsibilities towards their consumers and the early childhood field. It is apparent that pre-service training organisations and in-service providers need to focus more specifically on this area if the field is to achieve any major move towards a professional status in Australia.

This study is being followed up at present by a national survey of workers in Australian early childhood fields in all mainland states and the Northern Territory to determine if any differences exist between the concerns of workers in the various states. Data from this phase of the project should be available towards the end of 1989.

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TABLE 1
DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS' BACKGROUND

DESCRIPTOR		PERCENTAGE
1. Gender	. Male	3.4
	. Female	95.8
2. Age	. Under 20 years	5.0
	. 20-25 years	31.1
	. 26-30 years	26.1
	. 31-40 years	16.0
3. Qualifications	. Qualified	84.9
	. Unqualified	4.2
4. Type of Qualification	. TAFE Certificate in Child Care/ Mothercraft Nurse	30.2
	. Associate Diploma of Child Care	7.5
	. Diploma of Social Sciences (Child Care)	20.1
	. Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood)	12.7
	. Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood)	1.7
	. Bachelor of Education (Primary)	1.7
5. Currently enrolled in Further Study	. Yes	26.1
	. No	69.7
6. Job Description	. Child Care Worker	42.0
	. Kindergarten/Preschool Teacher	29.4
	. Child Care Co-ordinator	18.5
7. Time Fraction Employed	. Full time	72.3
	. Part time	19.3
8. Early Childhood Work Experience	. Less than 1 year	11.8
	. 1-5 years	35.3
	. 5-10 years	6.7
	. 11+ years	45.4
9. Work Experience with a Male Worker	. Yes	57.1
	. No	39.5
10. Previous Employment History	. None	48.7
	. Nanny	4.8
	. Teachers aide/Integration aide	11.2
	. Clerical	11.2
	. Shop Assistant	8.0
	. Nursing Community worker	9.6
	. Home Duties	1.6
11. Funding Source of Employing Body	. Private Centre	4.2
	. Local Council	19.3
	. State Government	31.9
	. Federal Government	32.6

TABLE 2**ETHICAL ISSUES MOST FREQUENTLY ENCOUNTERED**

Rank	Issues	Percentage of Respondents
1.	Conflicts with parents over issues such as discipline, policy re sick children, concerns of divorced parents	28.8
2.	Professional issues, e.g., conduct, confidentiality, providing an appropriate environment for young children	11.2
3.	The welfare of the children in terms of abuse and negligence (physical, mental or sexual)	6.4
3.	Conflicts over religions or cultural values	6.4
5.	Conflicts over values (parental versus staff, domestic violence and law breaking)	4.8
5.	Psychological and family problems (concern regarding lack of training to deal with these, communication with other professionals, resourcing and referral of parents)	4.8
7.	Staff conflicts (e.g. discipline, lack of competence, drug abuse, problem of staff, leaving room unattended, lack teamwork)	3.2
8.	Administrative issues (e.g. safety, legal, rights of the consumer, policies, staff morale, time-off, profit vs quality)	1.6
9.	Staff ratio to children	0.8

TABLE 3
ETHICAL ISSUES OF GREATEST CONCERN TO
EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS

Rank	Issue	Percentage of Respondents
1	Dealing with requests to treat children in ways believed to be harmful or inappropriate	53.8
2	Discussing a child or family in a non-professional setting	46.5
3	Knowing that the centre or program is in violation of government regulations	37.8
4	Implementing policies believed to be not good for the children because the program requires them	36.2
5	Dealing with conflicting requests from separated/divorced parents	35.3
6	Giving parents information that they may request but that may be used in punitive ways with children	31.9
7	Leaving the room or centre to conduct personal business	25.2
8	Discovering from a child that a parent may be breaking the law	19.4
9	Letting children do an activity that may not be worthwhile or appropriate	14.3
10	Sharing the nurturing role with male early childhood workers	6.7

TABLE 4**ETHICAL PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN RELATIONSHIPS
IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD FIELD**

Rank	Relationship	Percentage of Respondents
1	Staff-parent interactions, e.g. conflict over methods of toilet training	35.3
2	Staff-staff interactions, e.g. conflict over the choice of activities offered to the children	26.9
2	Staff-administration interactions, e.g. conflict over who makes the decisions in the centre program	26.9
4	Staff-employing body interactions (if applicable), e.g. conflict over staff conditions, e.g. time in lieu	22.7
5	Agency-agency interactions (ethical concerns reported by people outside the centre program, e.g. college staff or students, consultants, specialists) e.g. college students reporting to college staff that children are being smacked	17.2

TABLE 5**PROBLEM AREAS OF CONCERN IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD FIELD**

Rank	Problem Area	Percentage of Respondents
1	Identifying and handling suspected child abuse and neglect	54.7
2	Unprofessional behavior on the part of staff, including values, beliefs, lifestyles of staff that seem potentially harmful for children	31.9
3	Confidentiality of information in and out of the early childhood setting	28.6
4	Values, beliefs, life styles of parents that seem potentially harmful for children	26.9
4	Appropriateness of behavior management techniques, e.g., discipline	26.9
6	Parental requests or behavior that violate what early childhood professionals believe to be in the best interests of the child	24.3
7	Appropriateness and adequacy of the curriculum or program	22.7
8	Conflicting obligations to and requests from divorcing parents and guardians	15.1
9	Violation of governmental/legal regulations or standards that warranted reporting	14.4
10	Priorities in the use of tangible resources such as money or materials	12.6